

Council for Strategic and International Studies

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**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IT IS A PLEASURE TO
BE HERE TODAY AND I'M DELIGHTED FOR THE
OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT UNITED STATES
SOUTHERN COMMAND AND THE SECURITY
CHALLENGES WE FACE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE
CARIBBEAN.**

**SINCE TAKING COMMAND OF SOUTHCOM
ALMOST 7 MONTHS AGO—I HAVE VISITED
SEVENTEEN COUNTRIES IN THE REGION – SOME
MULTIPLE TIMES. MY TRAVELS THROUGH LATIN
AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ARE ENABLING MY
UNDERSTANDING OF THE CULTURAL-- ECONOMIC --
AND SECURITY LINKAGES OF THE AMERICAS. SOME
OF THESE CONNECTIONS ARE LONG-STANDING AND
ARE A NATURAL OUTGROWTH OF OUR
GEOGRAPHICAL PROXIMITY AND SHARED HISTORY.
BUT MANY OF THESE LINKS ARE COMPLEX AND**

**TRANSITIONAL – THE CONSEQUENCES OF
INCREASING GLOBALIZATION.**

**IN 2002-- HISPANICS BECAME THE LARGEST AND
FASTEST-GROWING MINORITY IN THE UNITED
STATES. THE HISPANIC INFLUENCE IN THE UNITED
STATES – IN SOCIETAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS – IS
PROFOUND – POSITIVE –AND GROWING. IT IS
ANTICIPATED THAT BY THE YEAR 2050-- ONE
QUARTER OF THE US POPULATION WILL BE OF
HISPANIC DESCENT. CURRENTLY-- THE U.S. HAS THE
WORLD'S 5TH LARGEST POPULATION OF SPANISH
SPEAKERS. ALSO OF NOTE IS THE FACT THAT ONE IN
60 PERSONS LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY
EMIGRATED HERE FROM CENTRAL AMERICA.**

**MOST NORTH AMERICANS ASSUME THAT THE
MIDDLE EAST IS OUR PRIMARY SOURCE OF
IMPORTED PETROLEUM. THE FACT IS THAT LATIN
AMERICA PROVIDES MORE OF OUR IMPORTED OIL
THAN ALL THE MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES**

COMBINED – WITH FOURTEEN PERCENT FROM VENEZUELA AND FIVE PERCENT FROM OTHER NATIONS IN THE SOUTHCOM AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY.

ECONOMICALLY-- THE TIES BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE REGION ARE STRONGER THAN ONE MIGHT THINK. THE UNITED STATES SELLS MORE TO THE 4 MERCOSUR COUNTRIES –ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, PARAGUAY AND URUGUAY--THAN TO CHINA AND INDIA COMBINED.

THESE COMMERCIAL TIES COULD BE STRENGTHENED WITH THE PASSAGE OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN – DOMINICAN REPUBLIC FREE TRADE AGREEMENT – CAFTA-DR. CAFTA-DR OPENS MARKETS FOR UNITED STATES EXPORTS. IT ALSO LOCKS IN DUTY-FREE ACCESS ALREADY GRANTED FOR MOST CAFTA-DR GOODS SOLD IN THE US, HELPING MAKE THE NATIONS MORE COMPETITIVE.

ADDITIONALLY -- WITH STRONGER ECONOMIES AND CLEARER RULES FOR BUSINESS -- CAFTA-DR CAN STRENGTHEN THE STRUGGLING DEMOCRACIES OF US NEIGHBORS -- REDUCING THE THREAT OF INSTABILITY – CRIME -- AND POTENTIALLY EVEN TERRORISM.

LESS POVERTY MEANS LESS CRIME, LESS POLITICAL UPHEAVAL, LESS MIGRATION, AND A MORE STABLE REGION.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO BE PARTNERS IN A HUGE, MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES —A HEMISPHERIC ECONOMIC ENGINE THAT WOULD NOT BE ANYONE’S HANDMAIDEN. I USE THE WORD “POTENTIAL” BECAUSE OUR GREATEST TRADE OPPORTUNITIES ARE AS YET UNREALIZED.

TO A GREAT EXTENT - THESE OPPORTUNITIES ARE HELD HOSTAGE BY A LACK OF SECURITY.

TODAY'S GLOBALIZATION HAS NOT ONLY ALLOWED COMMERCE TO RAPIDLY AND EASILY CROSS BORDERS -- BUT IT ALSO ALLOWS THREATS TO OUR WELL-BEING AND WAY OF LIFE TO DO THE SAME. THE TRANSNATIONAL TERRORIST -- THE NARCO-TERRORIST -- THE ISLAMIC RADICAL FUNDRAISER AND RECRUITER --THE ILLICIT TRAFFICKER -- THE MONEY LAUNDERER --THE KIDNAPPER -- AND THE GANG MEMBER HAVE ACCESS TO AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AN UNPRECEDENTED FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND ACTION. THIS DYNAMIC HAS LED TO THE EMERGENCE OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN AS THE WORLD LEADER IN A CATEGORY OF DUBIOUS DISTINCTION -- VIOLENCE. WITH A HOMICIDE RATE OF NEARLY 28 PER 100,000 PEOPLE-- LATIN AMERICA HAS ECLIPSED AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST AS THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS REGION-- AND CONTINUES TO EXPERIENCE THE

HIGHEST KIDNAPPING RATE ON THE PLANET. IN THE PAST DECADE, HOMICIDE RATES HAVE RISEN BY 380% IN PERU, 330% IN COLOMBIA AND 300% IN ARGENTINA.

TODAY'S LATIN AMERICA FACES A WIDE ARRAY OF THREATS THAT ARE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO TACKLE.

FIRST AND FOREMOST AMONG THESE THREATS IS TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM. ALTHOUGH WE DON'T CURRENTLY SEE ACTIVE ISLAMIC RADICAL TERRORIST CELLS IN THE REGION -- WE HAVE DETECTED A NUMBER OF ISLAMIC RADICAL GROUP FACILITATORS WHO PARTICIPATE IN LOGISTICAL AND FUNDRAISING SUPPORT ACTIVITIES -- SUCH AS MONEY LAUNDERING -- DOCUMENT FORGERY --AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING.

WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE AND COMPLEXITY OF THIS THREAT. WE NEED TO

**ACKNOWLEDGE THAT CONVENTIONAL MILITARY
POWER IS INSUFFICIENT TO COMBAT IT.**

**A CLOSE RELATIVE OF TRANSNATIONAL
TERRORISM IS NARCO-TERRORISM. I'LL BE AMONG
THE FIRST TO ADMIT THAT NOT ALL NARCO-
TRAFFICKERS ARE TERRORISTS -- AND NOT ALL
TERRORISTS ARE NARCO-TRAFFICKERS -- BUT WE
ARE SEEING MORE INSTANCES OF THE TWO
ACTIVITIES BEING CLOSELY LINKED. LET ME TELL
YOU WHY THAT'S IMPORTANT: THESE NARCO-
TERRORIST GROUPS NO LONGER SOLELY RELY ON
POPULAR LEGITIMACY AS A SOURCE OF POWER--
BUT ARE INSTEAD BECOMING AUTONOMOUS --
FUELED BY AN ENORMOUS SUPPLY OF DRUG MONEY.**

**WITH THIS MONEY THE NARCO-TERRORISTS CAN
BUY POPULAR SUPPORT. THEY CAN BUY OFF
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS -- AND IF SOLDIERS --
POLICE -- AND JUDGES ARE NOT COOPERATIVE --**

**THE NARCO-TERRORISTS HAVE THE WHEREWITHAL
TO PURCHASE THE FIREPOWER TO OUTGUN THEM.**

**GANGS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SHUT DOWN HUGE
SECTIONS OF LARGE CITIES AT WILL. IN BRAZIL --
THE GANGS HAVE BECOME SUCH A PROBLEM THAT
THE BRAZILIAN MILITARY HAS BEEN CALLED UPON
TO ASSIST IN CONTROLLING THE MOST VIOLENT
FAVELAS IN SAO PAULO AND RIO DE JANEIRO. THIS
GANG PROBLEM HAS HIT CENTRAL AMERICA
ESPECIALLY HARD -- WITH ESTIMATES RANGING
FROM 70,000 TO OVER 200,000 GANG MEMBERS.
REPORTEDLY -- THEIR PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME
IS ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING. ALTHOUGH THESE
GANGS HAVE DEMONSTRATED AN UNPRECEDENTED
LEVEL OF BRUTALITY -- THEY ARE ANYTHING BUT
SIMPLE. THESE GANGS ARE HIGHLY COMPLEX
ORGANIZATIONS. THEY USE BROADBAND AND
WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY -- EMPLOY THROW-AWAY
CELL PHONES TO COMMIT SENSELESS CRIMES -- AND**

PURPOSELY USE FLEDGING MEMBERS WITH NO CRIMINAL RECORDS TO COMMIT MURDERS. THEY OFTEN TRAVEL AMONG CENTRAL AMERICAN NATIONS AND THE U.S., WITH EASE - AND WHEN THEY FEEL PRESSURE IN ONE LOCATION OR ANOTHER-- THEY CONTINUE TO MOVE TO SAFER LOCATIONS.

THE PROBLEM OF KIDNAPPING IN THE REGION HAS GROWN INTO AN ENORMOUS SECURITY CHALLENGE. ALTHOUGH LATIN AMERICA ACCOUNTS FOR ONLY 10% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION-- 75% OF THE WORLD'S KIDNAPPINGS OCCUR IN LATIN AMERICA. AMONG THE TEN COUNTRIES WITH THE WORLD'S HIGHEST RATES OF KIDNAPPINGS-- FIVE ARE LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. COLOMBIA IS BY FAR THE WORLD LEADER WITH 1,500 PEOPLE ABDUCTED LAST YEAR.

NATURAL DISASTERS ARE ANOTHER THREAT. THEY CAN KILL THOUSANDS--OR AT TIMES -- TRIGGER MASS MIGRATION--OFTEN RESULTING IN

**INCREDIBLE SUFFERING AND TRAGEDY. MASS
MIGRATION ALSO PLACES UNACCEPTABLE
STRESSES ON COUNTRIES ILL PREPARED TO
SUPPORT THE BASIC NEEDS OF SUCH AN
UNANTICIPATED AND UNREGULATED FLOW OF
REFUGEES. THE COST TO REBUILD AFTER A
NATURAL DISASTER IS HIGH— THE PROVISIONING OF
FUNDS IS SLOW-- AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT
OFTEN SUFFERS FROM A SHORT ATTENTION SPAN.**

**NOW – THE FACT IS -- THESE THREATS DO NOT
EXIST IN A VACUUM – THEY HAVE DEVELOPED OVER
DECADES AND ARE FIRMLY ROOTED IN THE RELATED
CONDITIONS OF POVERTY-- INEQUALITY-- AND
CORRUPTION.**

**IN SPITE OF THE FREE MARKET ECONOMIC
REFORMS AND THE GROWTH OF DEMOCRACY IN THE
REGION IN THE 1990'S, POVERTY IN LATIN AMERICA
HAS GROWN BOTH IN ABSOLUTE NUMBERS AND AS A**

PERCENTAGE OF THE OVERALL POPULATION.

TODAY OVER FORTY-FOUR PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ARE MIRED IN THE HOPELESSNESS AND SQUALOR OF POVERTY,

THIS LACK OF PROGRESS STANDS IN STARK CONTRAST TO THE IMPROVEMENT THE REST OF THE WORLD HAS MADE IN REDUCING EXTREME POVERTY. BETWEEN 1990 AND 2001 THE DEVELOPING WORLD REDUCED EXTREME POVERTY FROM 28 PERCENT TO 21 PERCENT.

UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH EXACERBATES THE POVERTY PROBLEM. THE RICHEST ONE TENTH OF THE POPULATION OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN EARN 48% OF THE TOTAL INCOME -- WHILE THE POOREST TENTH EARN ONLY 1.6%. BY COMPARISON -- THE COUNTRY THAT HAS THE LEAST ECONOMIC DISPARITY OF ALL LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES -- IS STILL

WORSE THAN THE MOST UNEQUAL COUNTRY IN ALL OF EASTERN EUROPE.

AN HISTORICAL CLIMATE OF CORRUPTION IS WIDELY PREVALENT THROUGHOUT THE REGION. IT IS A CANCER FEEDING ON ECONOMIC SYSTEMS -- DESTROYING INSTITUTIONS AND RUINING PEOPLE'S FAITH IN THEIR GOVERNMENT. A 2002 STUDY BY THE RESPECTED GETULIO VARGAS FOUNDATION AND TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL CONCLUDED THAT A 10% REDUCTION IN CORRUPTION WOULD ENABLE BRAZIL TO NEARLY DOUBLE THE PER CAPITA GDP BY 2020.

THE 2004 TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL CORRUPTION PERCEPTION INDEX REVEALS THAT IN SPITE OF HIGH MARKS FOR CHILE AND URUGUAY, THE AVERAGE SCORE FOR LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES WAS 3.4 OUT OF TEN WITH 10 BEING THE LEAST CORRUPT AND 0 THE MOST CORRUPT.

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT MONEY IS A COWARD. NOWHERE IS THIS TRUER THAN IN OUR REGION. THE WORLD BANK ESTIMATED IN 1998 THAT LATIN AMERICA'S PER CAPITA INCOME WOULD BE 25% HIGHER IF IT HAD A CRIME RATE SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE REST OF THE WORLD. BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF SECURITY -- FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT -- THE LIFEBLOOD OF ECONOMIC GROWTH -- IS GOING MORE TO ASIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST AND LESS TO LATIN AMERICA. WHILE LATIN AMERICA ATTRACTED MORE THAN HALF OF THE WORLD'S INVESTMENTS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THE 1970'S -- THE REGION NOW RECEIVES LESS THAN A QUARTER.

THE LACK OF SECURITY AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY THREATENS TO REVERSE DEMOCRACY'S HARD-WON PROGRESS. UNANSWERED GRIEVANCES AND UNFULFILLED PROMISES TO THE MARGINALIZED PEOPLES OF SOCIETY HAVE RESULTED IN DEEP-ROOTED

**DISSATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY AS A PROCESS
AND AS AN INSTITUTION.**

**SINCE 1999-- NINE DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED
PRESIDENTS HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM OFFICE
BEFORE THE END OF THEIR TERM. THE MOST
RECENT OF THESE WAS PRESIDENT GUTIERREZ OF
ECUADOR-- WHO WAS REMOVED FROM OFFICE BY
THE CONGRESS ON APRIL 20TH.**

**IN MANY PARTS OF THE REGION-- DISTRUST AND
LOSS OF FAITH IN FAILED INSTITUTIONS FUEL THE
EMERGENCE OF ANTI-US -- ANTI-GLOBALIZATION --
AND ANTI-FREE TRADE ELEMENTS WHO INCITE
VIOLENCE AGAINST THEIR OWN GOVERNMENTS AND
THEIR OWN PEOPLE.**

**WITH ALL THE THREATS AND CHALLENGES I'VE
MENTIONED, AT THIS POINT YOU MAY BE THINKING,
“OK, GENERAL, NOW WHAT ARE YOU DOING ABOUT
IT?”**

SOUTHERN COMMAND RECOGNIZES THAT THE THREATS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN TODAY ARE UNCONVENTIONAL. FOR THAT REASON -- SOUTHCORP'S OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IS NOT CONVENTIONALLY MILITARY. MUCH OF OUR MISSION IS ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH THE INTERAGENCY -- DIPLOMACY -- AND COOPERATIVE EFFORTS WITH OUR PARTNER NATIONS. WE DEPLOY PLATOONS FOR TRAINING EXERCISES WITH OUR PARTNERS TODAY -- SO THAT WE DON'T HAVE TO DEPLOY DIVISIONS TOMORROW.

SOME OF SOUTHCORP'S INITIATIVES ARE STANDARD MILITARY-TO-MILITARY ENGAGEMENT -- NOT UNLIKE WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE FOR MANY YEARS. BUT MUCH OF WHAT SOUTHCORP IS DOING TO ACCOMPLISH ITS MISSION TODAY HAS VERY LITTLE DOCTRINAL BASIS -- AND PRECIOUS LITTLE PRECEDENT.

**IN 2002 WE FORMED A JOINT INTERAGENCY
COORDINATION GROUP THAT MEETS IN MY
HEADQUARTERS AND IS CHAIRED BY MY CHIEF OF
STAFF. THE COORDINATION GROUP IS MADE UP OF
REPRESENTATIVES FROM MANY US GOVERNMENT
AGENCIES THAT DEAL WITH LATIN AMERICA AND THE
CARIBBEAN. OUR AGENDAS FOR THESE MEETINGS
ARE WIDE-RANGING: COUNTERTERRORISM TO PORT
SECURITY TO GANGS TO COUNTERING ILLICIT
TRAFFICKING OPERATIONS. WE SHARE
INFORMATION -- EVALUATE COMMON CHALLENGES --
AND ARRIVE AT NEW WAYS TO COOPERATE AND
COMPLEMENT WHAT OTHER AGENCIES ARE DOING.
THE JOINT INTERAGENCY COORDINATION GROUP IS
COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY -- I JUST INVITE-- I HAVE
NO AUTHORITY TO ORDER ANYONE TO COME. THE
COORDINATION GROUP HAS GROWN TO 50
REPRESENTATIVES THOUGH -- BECAUSE THESE
AGENCIES SEE THE SYNERGISTIC BENEFIT OF**

**COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION. THEY CAN
WORK SMARTER INSTEAD OF HARDER.**

**WE HELP PARTNER NATION MILITARIES TO
IDENTIFY AND OPTIMIZE NEEDED CAPABILITY – -AND -
- WITHIN THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITS – AND OUR
STATUTORY AUTHORITY -- PROVIDE SUPPORT TO
THEIR POLICE. WE ENCOURAGE THEM TO TRAIN AND
EQUIP TO ACHIEVE A CAPABILITY TO COMBAT
TODAY’S TRANSNATIONAL THREATS. THIS
CAPABILITY HAS MUCH MORE TO DO WITH CHANGING
MINDSETS AND ESTABLISHING COOPERATIVE
RELATIONSHIPS THAN IT DOES WITH BUYING
MILITARY EQUIPMENT. IT REQUIRES AN HONEST
APPRAISAL OF HOW PARTNER NATION MILITARIES
ORGANIZE – TRAIN – EQUIP -- AND OPERATE. IT
REQUIRES AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF THE
CONSTITUTIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF
THE MILITARY AND THE POLICE IN EACH COUNTRY
INSTEAD OF A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROACH. AND**

**IN MANY WAYS-- THE UNITED STATES MILITARY IS
SETTING THE EXAMPLE IN THIS TRANSFORMATION
BY HAVING THE VISION AND COURAGE TO
TRANSFORM OURSELVES.**

**ITS TIME TO REASSESS AND REVAMP OUR 20TH
CENTURY SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROCESS TO
BETTER REWARD OUR SECURITY PARTNERS AND
ENCOURAGE THEM TO COOPERATE ON A REGIONAL
BASIS.**

**IN COLOMBIA -- SOUTHCOM PROVIDES TRAINING-
- PLANNING ASSISTANCE AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT
TO THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST
NARCO-TERRORISTS. THIS SUPPORT HAS BEEN A
KEY ELEMENT OF THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT'S
PROGRESS IN REDUCING HOMICIDES-- KIDNAPPINGS-
- AND TERRORIST ACTIVITIES -- AND MAKING
ENORMOUS PROGRESS TO DEFEAT THE INSURGENTS
THEY HAVE BATTLED FOR DECADES. FOR THE FIRST**

TIME IN COLOMBIA'S HISTORY, THERE IS POLICE PRESENCE IN EVERY MUNICIPALITY IN THE COUNTRY.

SOUTHCOM'S JOINT INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE IN KEY WEST, FLORIDA-- IN CONJUNCTION WITH MULTINATIONAL AND INTERAGENCY EFFORTS-- DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTED LAST FISCAL YEAR TO THE SEIZURE OF OVER 222 METRIC TONS OF COCAINE WITH AN APPROXIMATE WHOLESALE VALUE OF NEARLY FOUR BILLION DOLLARS.

THIS INTERDICTION DOES TWO THINGS: IT KEEPS THE UNITED STATES SAFER -- AND IT DENIES NARCO-TERRORISTS THE FUNDS THEY NEED TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE.

AT SOUTHCOM WE ALSO SEEK A REGIONAL APPROACH TO HEMISPHERIC SECURITY CHALLENGES. THE BEST CURRENT EXAMPLE OF REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION IS IN HAITI. THE UNITED NATIONS STABILIZATION FORCE IN HAITI -- KNOWN AS MINUSTAH -- IS LED BY BRAZIL AND

**SUPPORTED BY SECURITY FORCES FROM 10 LATIN
AMERICAN COUNTRIES – OVER 3500 SOLDIERS!
CHILE’S CONTINUOUS PARTICIPATION IN HAITI GOES
BACK TO THE MULTINATIONAL INTERIM FORCE--
WHEN CHILEAN FORCES DEPLOYED WITHIN 48
HOURS OF THE PASSAGE OF UN RESOLUTION 1529.**

**BUT THE FACT THAT THE MAJORITY OF
MINUSTAH’S MILITARY COMPONENT IS MADE UP OF
LATIN AMERICANS TELLS ONLY HALF THE STORY. IN
SPITE OF LAST YEAR’S DEVASTATING HURRICANE
SEASON -- PEACEKEEPERS HAVE SHOWN
RESILIENCE AND RESOLVE AND PERFORMED
SUPERBLY. THEY ARE HELPING SET THE SECURITY
CONDITIONS NECESSARY TO ALLOW FOR ELECTIONS
THIS FALL.**

**THE PANAMA CANAL MAY WELL BE THE HIGHEST
VALUE STRATEGIC TARGET IN THE HEMISPHERE – ITS
EFFECTIVE AND UNINTERRUPTED OPERATION IS
CRITICAL TO WORLD COMMERCE. IN YEARS PAST--**

**THE UNITED STATES HAS PARTICIPATED IN A
BILATERAL EXERCISE WITH THE PANAMANIAN TO
PROTECT THE CANAL. IN 2003-- THAT EXERCISE
EXPANDED TO 9 PARTICIPATING NATIONS. THIS
YEAR-- THE PANAMAX EXERCISE – AS IT IS KNOWN- -
WILL SEE 15 COUNTRIES WORKING TOGETHER IN A
ROBUST AIR-- GROUND-- AND MARITIME SCENARIO.**

**THE REGIONAL SUPPORT OF COLOMBIA'S
NEIGHBORS HAS BEEN VITAL TO THE IMPRESSIVE
PROGRESS MADE AGAINST NARCO-TERRORIST
GROUPS. TO PROTECT THEIR OWN RESOURCES--
PEOPLE-- AND SOVEREIGNTY-- BRAZIL-- ECUADOR--
PANAMÁ AND PERÚ HAVE ALL TAKEN DECISIVE
COUNTER-DRUG ACTIONS ON THEIR BORDERS.**

**HOWEVER -- AMONG COLOMBIA'S NEIGHBORS --
VENEZUELA'S RECORD OF COOPERATION REMAINS
MIXED. THERE IS CONCERN THAT NARCO-TERRORIST
GROUPS CONSIDER THE AREAS OF THE**

**VENEZUELAN/COLOMBIAN BORDER A SAFE AREA TO
REST-- REFIT-- AND TRANSSHIP DRUGS AND ARMS.**

**ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE CENTRAL AMERICAN
ARMED FORCES – KNOWN BY ITS INITIALS IN
SPANISH: CFAC -- GIVE US GREAT CONFIDENCE IN
THE FUTURE OF CENTRAL AMERICAN REGIONAL
COOPERATION. THE GOVERNMENTS OF EL
SALVADOR-- GUATEMALA-- HONDURAS-- AND
NICARAGUA ESTABLISHED CFAC IN 1997 TO
REGIONALIZE THEIR SECURITY EFFORTS. CFAC WAS
QUICK TO SHOW ITS COLLECTIVE SOLIDARITY POST
9-11-- AND HAS SINCE TAKEN STEPS TO ENHANCE
REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE WAR ON
TERRORISM. MOST RECENTLY CFAC HAS BEEN
DEVELOPING A PLAN OF ACTION TO STRENGTHEN
THEIR CAPACITY TO SUPPORT PEACEKEEPING
OPERATIONS BY ESTABLISHING A REGIONAL
PEACEKEEPING TRAINING CENTER.**

AT SOUTHCOM-- WE CONTINUE TO ENHANCE THE RELEVANCE AND TRAINING VALUE OF OUR EXERCISES – BOTH FOR US AND FOR OUR PARTNER NATIONS. THIS SPRING -- A MULTILATERAL EXERCISE CALLED “TRADEWINDS” INTEGRATED POLICE—MILITARY—AND CIVILIAN ORGANIZATIONS TO PRACTICE SECURITY FOR THE WORLD CRICKET CUP IN 2007. ADDITIONALLY -- THE SILVER LINING IN THE DARK CLOUD OF UNREST AND HUMAN TRAGEDY IN HAITI IS THAT PARTNER NATIONS’ PEACEKEEPING FORCES DEPLOYED TO HAITI WELL PREPARED BY YEARS OF MULTILATERAL PEACEKEEPING EXERCISES.

ALTHOUGH AS MILITARY PEOPLE -- THERE’S LITTLE WE CAN DO TO DIRECTLY ATTACK THE PROBLEM OF POVERTY – WE CAN HELP TO MITIGATE ITS EFFECTS. OUR HUMANITARIAN EXERCISES – CALLED “NEW HORIZONS” -- BUILD DOZENS OF ROADS-- WELLS-- CLINICS-- AND SCHOOLS IN

UNDERSERVED AREAS. LAST YEAR-- MEDICAL AND VETERINARY READINESS DEPLOYMENTS TREATED OVER 290,000 PEOPLE -- AND OVER 525,000 ANIMALS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN-- ENHANCING THE HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE OF THOSE NEEDY PEOPLE.

THERE REMAINS MUCH TO BE DONE. WE BELIEVE THAT REGIONAL-- MULTILATERAL APPROACHES TO REGIONAL PROBLEMS MAKES SENSE. THE SUCCESSES THAT COLOMBIA AND BRAZIL HAVE HAD IN ESTABLISHING NATIONAL AIR BRIDGE DENIAL PROGRAMS COULD WELL BE EXPANDED INTO A REGIONAL AIR SOVEREIGNTY PROGRAM. THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN CENTRAL AMERICA-- WHERE SUSPECT FLIGHTS CAN RAPIDLY PASS THROUGH THE AIRSPACE OF AN ENTIRE COUNTRY.

I AM CONVINCED THAT WE MUST DO BETTER IN THE AREAS OF INTEROPERABILITY AND

INFORMATION SHARING. WE MUST BE ABLE TO
COMMUNICATE AND SHARE INFORMATION TODAY.
WHEN A CRISIS ARISES-- IT'S TOO LATE TO START
FIGURING OUT IF WE HAVE COMPATIBLE SYSTEMS
AND PERMISSION TO PASS OPERATIONAL
INFORMATION. THE ADAPTABILITY OF THE THREAT
DEMANDS THAT WE BE JUST AS FLEXIBLE.

THE MUTUAL SECURITY OF THE AMERICAS WILL
CREATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES CANNOT EXIST IN AN
ENVIRONMENT SO DANGEROUS THAT IT CANNOT
ATTRACT FOREIGN INVESTMENT.

TOMORROW'S SECURE ENVIRONMENT WILL
BRING ABOUT MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TRADE
OPPORTUNITIES-- ENCOURAGE FOREIGN
INVESTMENT-- REDUCE POVERTY-- AND CREATE
OPPORTUNITIES AND PROGRESS TOWARD A BETTER
FUTURE FOR THOSE WITH LITTLE HOPE TODAY.

WE CANNOT AFFORD FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN BECOME A BACKWATER OF VIOLENT -- INWARD-LOOKING STATES THAT ARE CUT OFF FROM THE WORLD AROUND THEM BY POPULIST - - AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENTS. ENGAGEMENT WITH LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IS A CLASSIC CASE OF "PAY-ME-NOW -- OR PAY-ME-LATER". WE CAN CREATE STRONG HEMISPHERIC ECONOMIC AND SECURITY PARTNERSHIPS-- OR WE CAN WATCH OUR HEMISPHERE'S DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS BEGIN TO DECAY AND CRUMBLE.

WE AT UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND WRESTLE WITH THESE QUESTIONS ON A DAILY BASIS.

I THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS YOU TODAY AND I LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR QUESTIONS.